



Photo by Karl Weisel

Sightseers and townspeople wander through Limburg's narrow pedestrian passageways and stop for refreshments in one of the many cafes and outdoor eateries scattered throughout the medieval town.



Photo by Martin Greeson

Families paddle their canoes through one of the locks along the scenic Lahn River between Diez and Dassenau. Photo below: an inline skater zooms along the Lahn riverbank with Limburg's St. George's Cathedral in the background.



Photo by Karl Weisel

# Limburg and the Lahn River

*Medieval towns, waterfront campgrounds and canoe adventures await visitors to this sleepy Rhein River tributary*

**By Karl Weisel**

*104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office*

Tourists the world over have explored Germany's famed Rhein River Valley. But most drive right past a tributary which leads to an entirely different realm.

Those who live on or around the Lahn River — Americans in Giessen and Wetzlar — know all about the river's picturesque and recreational appeal as it makes its way past medieval towns, hillside castles and monasteries. Although much smaller than its larger cousin, the Lahn has its share of inviting towns all along its sinuous waterway. Among the highlights are Bad Ems, Diez, Weilburg and Marburg.

A day's drive along the Lahn starting at Koblenz offers the chance to escape the more touristy Rhein towns to enter a smaller river valley that appeals more to bikers, campers and people wanting to canoe slowly through various locks, past turtles and medieval villages.

To enter the Lahn Valley one drives past the imposing Lahnstein Castle set high over the confluence of the Rhein and Lahn Rivers. The first major town along the route is the spa town of Bad Ems. This is a good place for a lunch break at one of the many cafes and restaurants situated under the rocky cliff face and adjacent to a large casino. The town was once the playground for royal families from near and far.

Stops at Dassenau, Nassau and Diez also offer opportunities to hike into the overlooking forests and fields and to explore some of the local historical sights. Bikers and inline skaters will enjoy traveling along the river from Diez to Limburg — a fairly flat ride that takes one through vibrant, yellow rape fields.

One of the crown jewels on the slow-moving body of water is Limburg. With its late-Romantic, seven-spined cathedral and colorfully painted half-timbered houses, Limburg dominates the skyline from many miles away when approaching by car or bike. A bridge dating back to the first wooden construction in the 12th century invites visitors across the Lahn into the Altstadt where crooked, half-timbered houses lean against one another forming a shaded canopy over restaurants and shops.

After climbing up through the narrow passageways in the old town one is rewarded with a full-scale view of the red-and-white St. George's Cathedral, which towers over the old town that dates back before the 10th century. The cathedral, which has been renovated extensively over the years and still features some of the frescoes from the 13th century, is considered a European art trea-

sure.

Regular services accompanied by the huge cathedral organ are featured in the historical house of worship. Upcoming organ services are Aug. 21, 28, Sept. 4, 11 and 18 at 4:30 p.m. There is no charge for the services. Special concerts featuring the organ include

ecclesiastical tango compositions by Guy Bovet Sept. 25 at 7:30 p.m., "Lux Aeterna" by Johann Sebastian Bach Nov. 7 at 7:30 p.m., a Bach advent concert Dec. 4 at 8 p.m. and a Bach Christmas oratorio Dec. 26 at 5 p.m. The concerts cost between €10 and €20.

From Limburg travelers can head farther east to continue exploring the medieval towns of Wetzlar and Weilburg — or head up into the hills to visit the impressive Braunfels Castle and nearby Kristallhöhle cavern. If one has more time continue on to Giessen and head north to the picturesque university town of Marburg.

If you'd prefer relaxing on the Lahn by spending a couple of days camping and canoeing, check with your local Outdoor Recreation Check-out Center for canoe and camping gear rental, information about where to start and on upcoming trips to the area. Outdoor Recs in Giessen, Hanau and Wiesbaden feature regular canoe trips on the Lahn and Alt-Rhein Rivers.

For more information call Hanau Outdoor Recreation at civ (06183) 902 087 or mil 322-8891, Baumholder Outdoor Rec at mil 485-7182, Dexheim Outdoor Rec at mil 334-5818, Friedberg Outdoor Rec at mil 324-3158, Giessen Outdoor Rec at mil 343-8207/8202 or Wiesbaden Outdoor Rec at mil 337-5760.



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Visitors to Limburg's St. George's Cathedral can enjoy a regular church organ concert series and other musical presentations.



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The casino town of Bad Ems features a variety of waterfront eateries, paddleboats for rent and oodles of hiking trails leading up into the nearby hills.